



A Guide to Writing Clearly

- ❑ **Use clear, familiar words.** Clear communication is not simple-minded. It's effective, normal language that we use every day. Don't be afraid of using everyday words — people understand them more readily than long, multi-syllabic words.

- ❑ **Use an informative title.** The title of your metadata set is one of the most important elements since most readers will look at that first to make a cursory judgment about whether it suits their needs. Make sure that your title is complete and includes the topic, the timeliness of the data, and specific information about the place and geography that the data describes.

- ❑ **Steer away from industry jargon and technical terms.** When you must use technical terms, define them first so that your readers understand what you're trying to tell them.

- ❑ **Select your key words wisely.** Since other people will use key words to find your file through a search engine, your key words play an important role in helping users find what they need. Choose your key words wisely. Make sure that they are clear and unambiguous. Use a variety of descriptive key words to help users zero in on your data set.

- ❑ **Write complete sentences, but keep them short and simple.** Don't write in sentence fragments. Don't worry about the occasional long sentence, but do concentrate on using sentences with few words.

- ❑ **When appropriate, try using bulleted lists.** Bulleted lists help readers skim your information quickly and easily. Using them might help you convey your message, shorten your text, and clarify your meaning.

- ❑ **Don't smother your verbs.** Strip away the layers from good, strong working verbs. Don't make weak nouns out of healthy verbs.

- ❑ **Have someone else review your writing.** It's a good idea to ask another person to review your writing to make sure that you've been complete and clear. Often we make assumptions about the content, thinking that what is evident to us is obvious to the reader. Having an outside reader will guard against omitting useful information.

**Don't Duck
Metadata**

